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175 771 [682] these four men and four women began on February 4, 1864, arousing all Port-au-Prince, the local population as well as the foreign legations and consulates. The guilt of the accused was soon evident; following their complete confession they were declared guilty of sorcery, cruelty, and murder, and all eight were condemned to death. They were executed on February 13, only six weeks after the crime. What these fanatics had done seemed as horrible to the Haitians as a similar crime would seem to Americans.

Much publicity was given the trial by foreign journalists who, with their flair for making the most of a dramatic tale, added whatever they could pick up by hearsay of the beliefs which had prompted the human sacrifice. The reading public, uncritical and uninformed about Haiti itself, if they gave the lurid accounts a second thought seem to have assumed that such actions were "what one might expect of Negroes." The incident would shortly have passed into that oblivion which awaits sensational news from obscure parts of the world, if it had not been kept alive by the British Minister, who was also an author.

114 771 In the 'eighties, after retirement from diplomatic service, Sir Spencer St. John wrote a two-volume work called *Hayti, or The Black Republic*. It was probably no more egregious in its dramatic account than were scores of other books by Englishmen who, in the latter years of the Victorian era, were discovering darkest Africa, holding dominion over palm and pine, and taking up the white man's burden all over the "heathen" world; but it possessed the literary qualities which made people buy it and discuss with avidity its horrendous details. The adjective "black" in its title seemed almost to refer to the moral characteristics of the people rather than to their skin color. Sir Spencer made a great many accurate, if somewhat one-sided, observations on the customs of the people, giving the public the first readable book in decades about the Haitians. The grisly climax of his story, however, is the *Affaire de Bizoton*. He amassed an astonishing collection of tales, practically all at second-hand, to prove that Vodun (Voodooism, he called it) was the real religion of the Haitians (which it was), and that it was compounded of the vilest superstitions and most fiendish practices, of which the most essential was human sacrifice of "the goat without horns" followed by a cannibalistic communion. Which, needless to say, it was not.

This is the sort of dramatic tale uncritical readers seem to like to

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Cassation at Port-au-Prince. In the event that this court confirmed the judgment of the lower courts, the defendant might still appeal from it to the president, and might apply for a new trial in the lower courts. Thus the contest would proceed ad infinitum, however clear the proof that the debt was just.

The Court of Cassation exceeded all others in the slowness of its judgments. Its judges were under the surveillance of the president, and must consult with him before deciding a case. If he disagreed, and the state was a party to the case, the judges must reconsider "to see if they have not taken a wrong view of the question at issue." Even so, the grand judge might stay execution as long as he deemed advisable after a judgment was confirmed.

Judges were rarely chosen from among trained lawyers, but were appointed by the government because of political considerations. Consequently, few people had any faith in court decisions, and in general they avoided taking their problems to law. The peasants in particular were bewildered by the whole procedure. White foreigners also often complained that unless they were willing to pay heavily they had no slightest chance of getting justice in the Haitian courts.

It must be emphasized that the majority of cases coming before the courts were civil rather than criminal, for it has been a universal matter of comment that the Haitian people were rarely guilty of serious crimes. Minor thefts of poultry or animals have been the commonest breaches of the peace, while murder, arson, and rape have almost never occurred. Even the bitterest critics of the republic have noted the absence of crime.[9] It is noteworthy that, despite their poverty and the hardness of their life, the Haitians are, contrary to the prevailing white man's notion of Negro unreliability, passion, and lawlessness, a tranquil folk. The absence of crime speaks volumes for the wholesomeness of a people much maligned by the stories of their "Voodoo" practices and bloody revolutions. An elite ex-president spoke to me with pride of the honesty of the country people who welcomed travelers with true hospitality and with no expectation of payment. "You might sleep safely in a country cabin with a thousand dollars on your person," he said."

9. Mackenzie, British consul during a part of Boyer's régime, and young Haiti's severest critic, said that during his whole stay he knew of only one murder, and that in this case the assassin was executed.

10. In times of revolution, beligerdence was supposed but was not accounted a crime, any more than killing in warfare is called murder.